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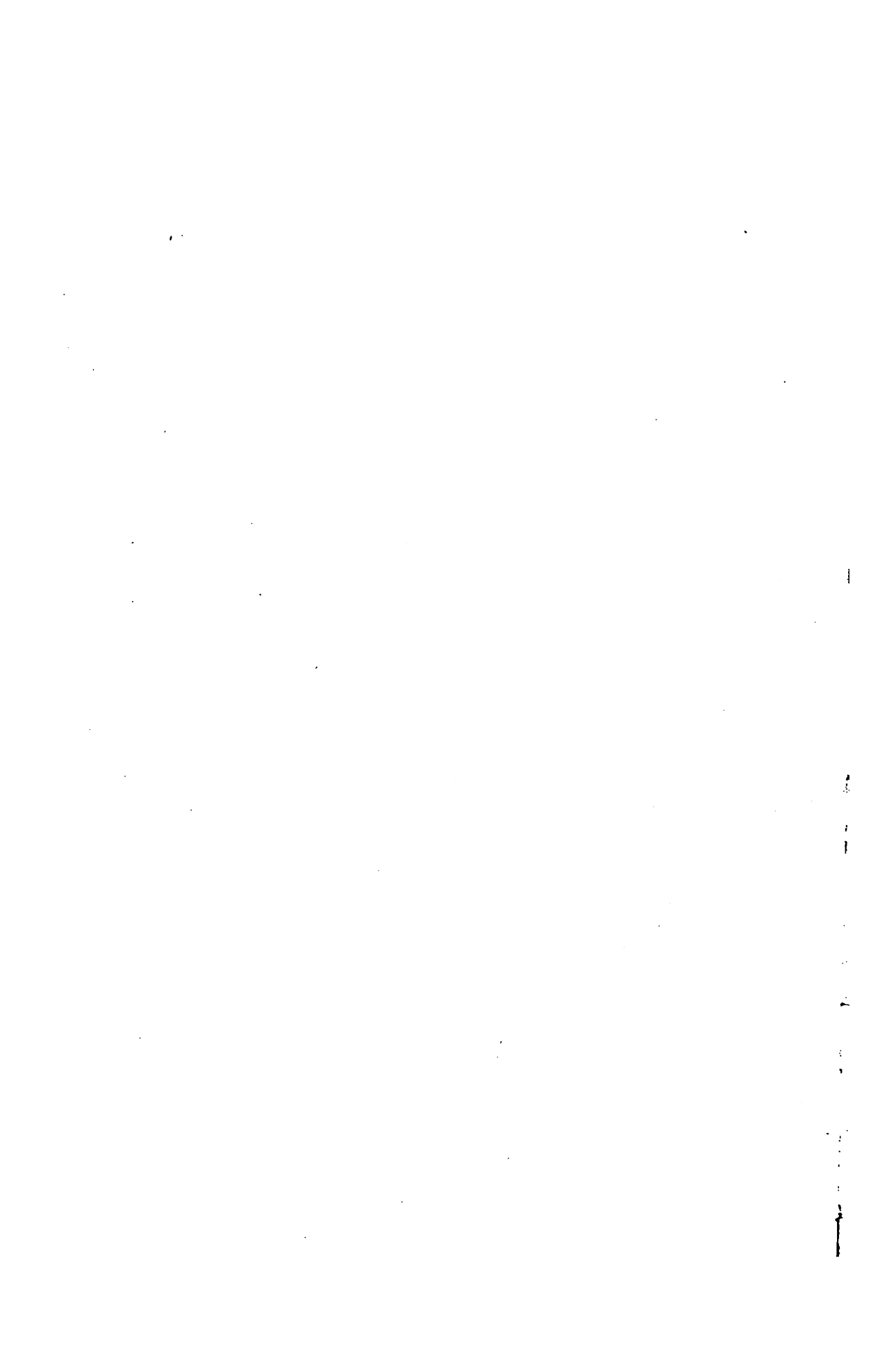
ERNEST BLANEY DANE

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**COMUS, A MASKE, BY JOHN MILTON; PRINTED  
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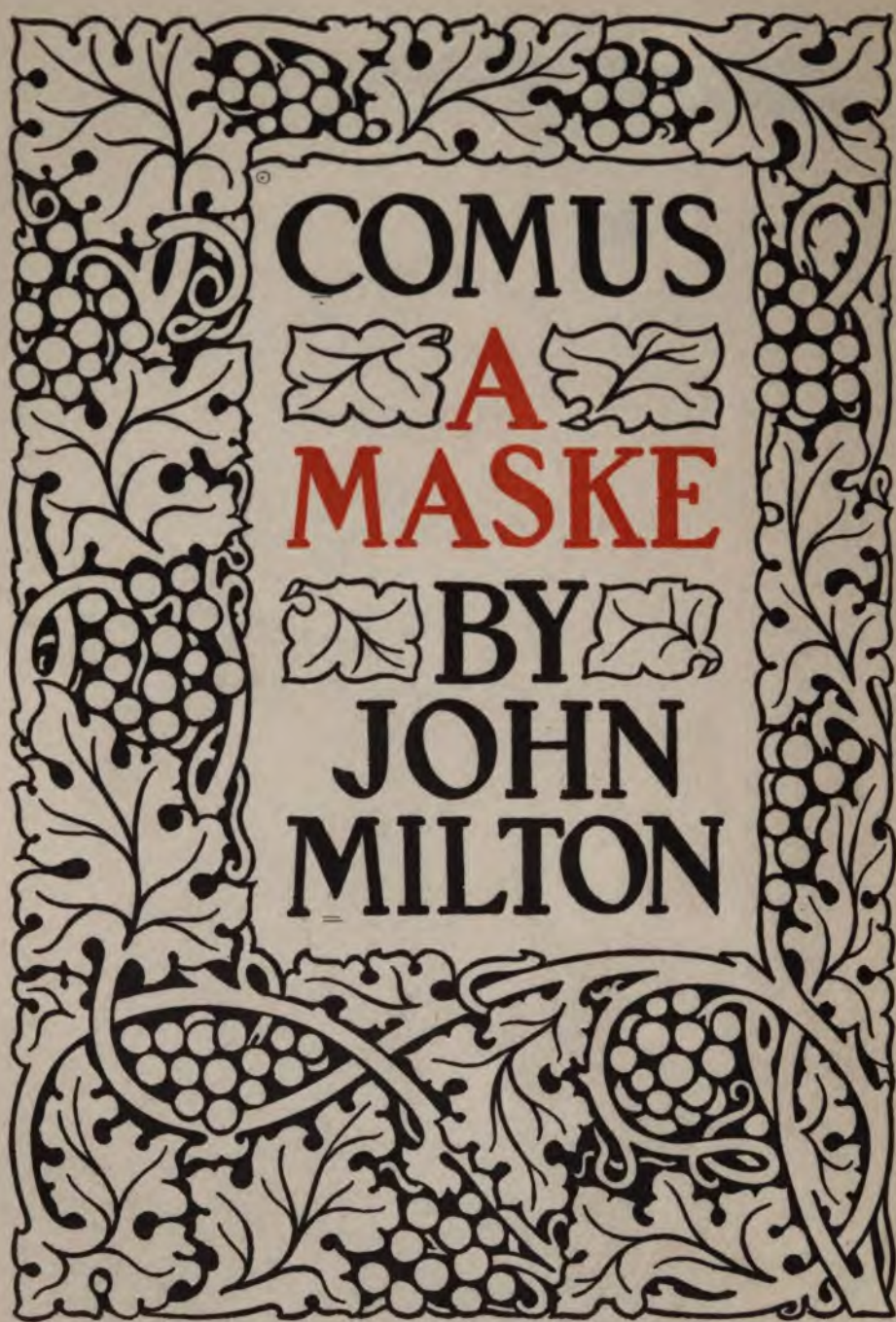


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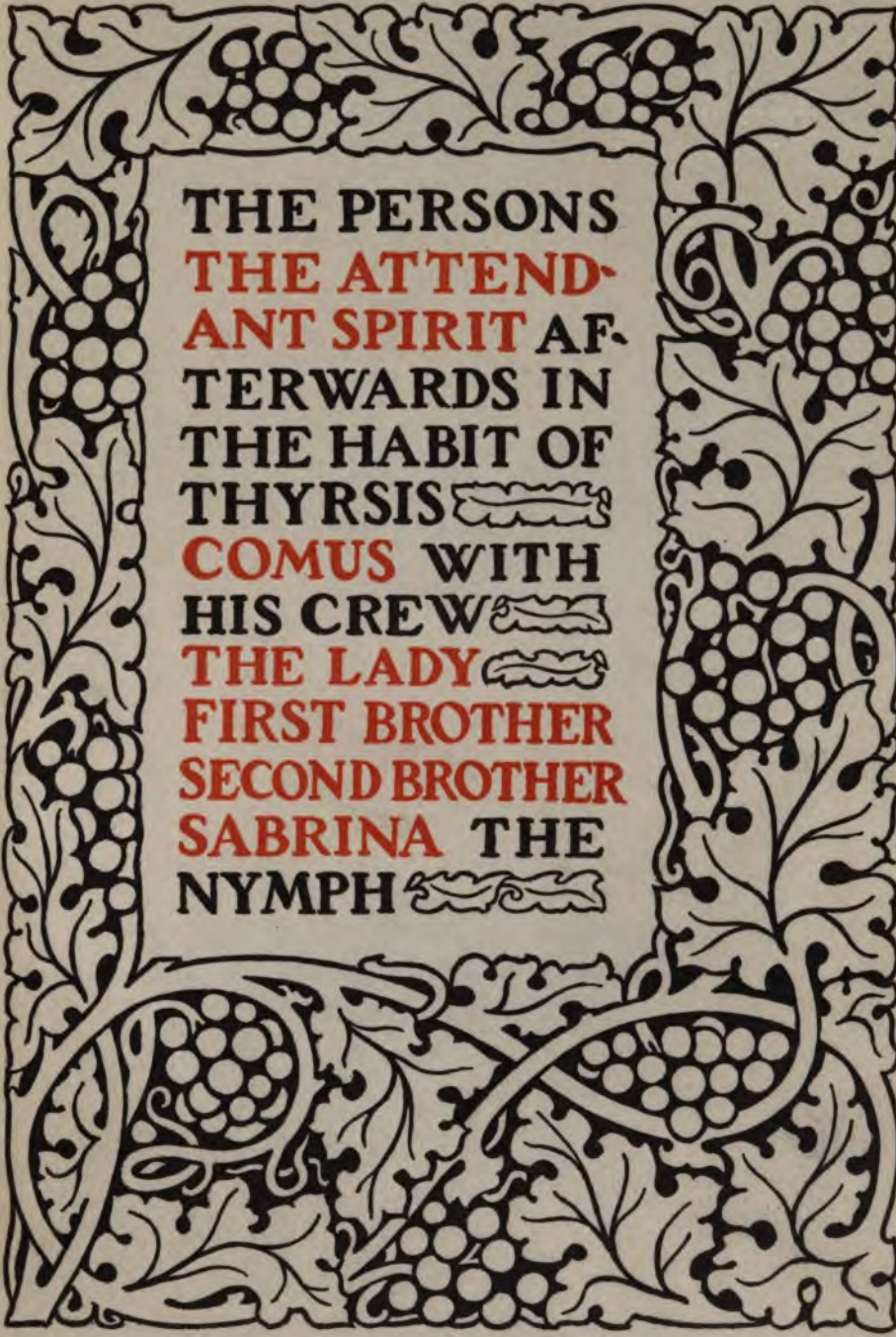
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The gift of  
Ernest Blancy Dane







THE PERSONS  
**THE ATTEND-  
ANT SPIRIT** AF-  
TERWARDS IN  
THE HABIT OF  
THYRSIS  
**COMUS** WITH  
HIS CREW  
**THE LADY**  
FIRST BROTHER  
SECOND BROTHER  
**SABRINA** THE  
NYMPH



**A M A S K E**  
**Presented**  
**At Ludlow Castle,**  
**1634:**

**On Michaelmasse night, before the**  
**Right Honorable,**

**IOHN Earle of Bridgewater, Vicount BRACKLY,**  
**Lord Præsident of Wales, And one of**  
**His Maiesties most honorable**  
**Privie Counsell.**

**Eheu quid volui misero mihi!**  
**floribus austrum Perditus —**

**London,**  
**Printed for HVMPHREY ROBINSON,**  
**At the signe of the Three Pidgeons in**  
**Pauls Church-yard. 1637.**

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORIE.

TO THE RIGHT

Honorable,

JOHN Lord Vicount BRACLY,

Son and heire apparent to the Earle  
of Bridgewater, &c.

MY LORD,

This Poem, which receiv'd its first occasion of birth from your selfe, and others of your noble familie, and much honour from your own Person in the performance, now returns againe to make a finall dedication of it selfe to you. Although not openly acknowledg'd by the Author, yet it is a legitimate offspring, so lovely, and so much desired, that the often copying of it hath tir'd my pen to give my severall friends satisfaction, and brought me to a necessitie of producing it to the publick view; and now to offer it up in all rightfull devotion to those faire hopes, and rare Endowments of your much-promising Youth, which give a full assurance, to all that know you, of a future excellence. Live sweet Lord to be the honour of your Name, and receive this as your owne, from the hands of him, who hath by many favours beene long oblig'd to your most honour'd Parents, and as in this repræsentation your attendant Thyrsis, so now in all reall expression


Your faithfull, and most

humble Servant,

H. LAWES.

A MASKE PERFORMED BEFORE THE PRÆ-  
IDENT OF WALES AT LUDLOW, 1634. THE  
FIRST SCENE DISCOVERS A WILD WOOD. THE  
ATTENDANT SPIRIT DESCENDS OR ENTERS.

COMUS  
A Maske

BEFORE the starrie threshold of Joves Court  
My mansion is, where those immortall shapes  
Of bright aëreall Spirits live insphear'd  
In Regions mild of calme and serene aire,  
Above the smoake and stirre of this dim spot  
Which men call Earth, and with low-thoughted care  
Confin'd, and pester'd in this pin-fold here,  
Strive to keepe up a fraile, and feaverish being  
Unmindfull of the crowne that Vertue gives  
After this mortall change to her true Servants  
Amongst the enthron'd gods on Sainted seats.  
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire  
To lay their just hands on that golden key  
That ope's the palace of Æternity:  
To such my errand is, and but for such  
I would not soile these pure ambrosial weeds  
With the ranck vapours of this Sin-worne mould.  
 But to my task. Neptune besides the sway  
Of every salt Flood, and each ebbing Streame  
Tooke in my lot 'twixt high, and neather Jove  
Imperial rule of all the Sea-girt Iles  
That like to rich, and various gemms inlay  
The unadorned bosome of the Deepe,  
Which he to grace his tributarie gods  
By course commits to severall government  
And gives them leave to weare their Saphire crowns,  
And weild their little tridents, but this Ile  
The greatest, and the best of all the maine  
He quarters to his blu-hair'd deities,  
And all this tract that fronts the falling Sun  
A noble Peere of mickle trust, and power  
Has in his charge, with temper'd awe to guide  
An old, and haughtie Nation proud in Armes:  
Where his faire off-spring nurs't in Princely lore



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The gift of  
Ernest Blaney Dane

COMUS  
A Maske

Tipsie dance, and Jollitie.  
Braid your Locks with rosie Twine,  
Dropping odours, dropping Wine.  
Rigor now is gone to bed,  
And Advice with scrupulous head,  
Strict Age, and sowre Severitie  
With their grave Sawes in slumber lie.  
We that are of purer fire,  
Immitate the starrie quire,  
Who in their nightly watchfull Spheares,  
Lead in swift round the Months and Yeares.  
The Sounds, and Seas with all their finnie drove,  
Now to the Moone in wavering Morrice move,  
And on the tawny sands and shelves,  
Trip the pert Fairies and the dapper Elves;  
By dimpled Brooke, and Fountaine brim,  
The Wood-nymphs deckt with daisies trim,  
Their merry wakes, and pastimes keepe,  
What hath night to doe with sleepe?  
Night hath better sweets to prove,  
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.  
Come let us our rights begin  
'Tis onely day-light that makes Sin  
Which these dun shades will ne're report.  
Haile Goddesses of Nocturnall sport  
Dark-vaild Cotytto, t' whom the secret flame  
Of mid-night Torches burnes; mysterious Dame  
That ne're at [art] call'd, but when the Dragon woome  
Of Stygian darknesse spets her thickest gloome  
And makes one blot of all the aire,  
Stay thy clowdie Ebon chaire,  
Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat', and befriend  
Us thy vow'd Priests, till utmost end  
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out  
Ere the blabbing Easterne scout  
The nice Morne on th' Indian steepe  
From her cabin'd loop hole peepe,  
And to the tel-tale Sun discry

Wur conceal'd Solemnity.  
Come, knit hands, and beate the ground  
In a light fantastick round.

COMUS  
A Maske

THE MEASURE.

Breake off, breake off, I feele the different pace  
Of some chast footing neere about this ground,  
Run to your shrouds, within these Brakes, and Trees  
Our number may affright: Some Virgin sure  
(For so I can distinguish by mine Art)  
Benighted in these woods. Now to my charmes  
And to my wilie trains, I shall e're long  
Be well stock't with as faire a Heard as graz'd  
About my Mother Circe. Thus I hurle  
My dazling Spells into the spungie aire  
Of power to cheate the eye with bleare illusion,  
And give it false presentments, lest the place  
And my queint habits breed astonishment,  
And put the Damsel to suspicious flight,  
Which must not be, for that's against my course;  
I under faire prætents of friendly ends,  
And wel plac't words of glozing courtesie  
Baited with reasons not unplaussible  
Wind me into the easie hearted man,  
And hug him into snares; when once her eye  
Hath met the vertue of this Magick dust,  
I shall appeare some harmlesse Villager  
Whom thrift keepes up about his Country geare  
But here she comes, I fairly step aside  
And hearken, if I may, her businesse here.

THE LADIE ENTERS.

This way the noise was, if mine eare be true  
My best guide now, me thought it was the sound  
Of Riot, and ill manag'd Merriment,  
Such as the jocond Flute, or gamesome Pipe  
Stirs up among the loose unleter'd Hinds  
When for their teeming Flocks, and granges full

COMUS  
A Maske

In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,  
And thanke the gods amisse. I should be loath  
To meet the rudenesse, and swill'd insolence  
Of such late Wassailers; yet ô [oh] where else  
Shall I informe my unacquainted feet  
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?  
My Brothers when they saw me wearied out  
With this long way, resolving here to lodge  
Under the spreading favour of these Pines  
Stept as they se'd to the next Thicket side  
To bring me Berries, or such cooling fruit  
As the kind hospitable woods provide.  
They left me then, when the gray-hooded Ev'n  
Like a sad Votarist in Palmer weeds  
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus waine.  
But where they are, and why they came not back  
Is now the labour of my thoughts, 'tis likeliest  
They had ingag'd their wandring steps too far,  
And envious darknesse, e're they could returne,  
Had stolne them from me, else ô [oh] theevisish Night  
Why shouldst thou, but for some fellonious end  
In thy darke lanterne thus close up the Stars,  
That nature hung in Heav'n, and fill'd their lamps  
With everlasting oile to give due light  
To the misled, and lonely Travailer.  
This is the place, as well as I may guesse  
Whence even now the tumult of loud Mirth  
Was rife, and perfect in my listening eare,  
Yet nought but single darknesse doe I find,  
What might this be? a thousand fantasies  
Begin to throng into my memorie  
Of calling shapes, and beckning shadows dire,  
And ayrie tongues, that syllable mens names  
On Sands, and Shoars, and desert Wildernesses.  
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound  
The vertuous mind, that ever walks attended  
By a strong siding champion Conscience.—  
O welcome pure-ey'd Faith, white-handed Hope

Thou flittering Angel girt with golden wings,  
 And thou unblemish't forme of Chastitie  
 I see yee visibly, and now beleve  
 That he, the Supreme good, t' whom all things ill  
 Are but as slavish officers of vengeance  
 Would send a glistring Guardian if need were  
 To keepe my life, and honour unassail'd.  
 Was I deceiv'd, or did a sable cloud  
 Turne forth her silver lining on the night?  
 I did not erre, there does a sables cloud  
 Turne forth her silver lining on the night  
 And casts a gleame over this tufted Grove.  
 I cannot hallow to my Brothers, but  
 Such noise as I can make to be heard fardest  
 Ile venter, for my new enliv'nd spirits  
 Prompt me; and they perhaps are not farre off.

COMUS  
 A Maske

SONG.

Sweet echo, sweetest Nymph that liv'st unseene  
     Within thy ayrie shell  
     By slow Meander's margent greene,  
 And in the violet-imbroider'd vale  
     Where the love-lorne Nightingale  
 Nightly to thee her sad Song mourneth well.  
 Canst thou not tell me of a gentle Paire  
     That likest thy Narcissus are?  
     O if thou have  
     Hid them in some flowrie Cave,  
     Tell me but where  
 Sweet Queene of Parlie, Daughter of the Sphare,  
 So maist thou be translated to the skies,  
 And give resounding grace to all Heav'ns Harmonies.

COMUS. Can any mortall mixture of Earths mould  
 Breath such Divine enchanting ravishment?  
 Sure something holy lodges in that brest,  
 And with these raptures moves the vocal aire  
 To testifie his hidden residence;

COMUS  
A Maske

How sweetly did they float upon the wings  
Of Silence, through the emptie-vaulted night  
At every fall smoothing the Raven downe  
Of darknesse till she smil'd: I have oft heard  
My mother Circe with the Sirens three  
Amidst the flowrie-kirtl'd Naiades  
Culling their Potent hearbs, and balefull drugs  
Who as they sung, would take the prison'd soule  
And lap it in Elysium, Scylla wept,  
And chid her barking waves into attention,  
And fell Charybdis murmur'd soft applause:  
Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense  
And in sweet madnesse rob'd it of it selfe,  
But such a sacred, and home-felt delight,  
Such sober certainty of waking blisse  
I never heard till now. Ile speak to her  
And she shall be my Queene. Haile forreine wonder  
Whom certaine these rough shades did never breed  
Unlesse the Goddesses that in rurall shrine  
Dwell'st here with Pan, or Silvan, by blest Song  
Forbidding every bleake unkindly Fog  
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.  
LADIE. Nay gentle Shepherd ill is lost that praise  
That is addrest to unattending Eares,  
Not any boast of skill, but extreame shift  
How to regaine my fever'd companie  
Compell'd me to awake the courteous Echo  
To give me answer from her mossie Couch.  
COMUS. What chance good Ladie hath bereft you thus?  
LADIE. Dim darknesse, and this leavie Labyrinth.  
COMUS. Could that divide you from neere-ushering guides?  
LADIE. They left me weary on a grassie terfe.  
COMUS. By falsehood, or discourtesie, or why?  
LADIE. To seeke i'th vally some coole friendly Spring.  
COMUS. And left your faire side all unguarded Ladie?  
LADIE. They were butt waine, & purpos'd quick return.  
COMUS. Perhaps fore-stalling night praevented them.  
LADIE. How easie my misfortune is to hit!

COMUS. Imports their losse, beside the præsent need?

LADIE. No lesse then if I should my brothers lose.

COMUS. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?

LADIE. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazor'd lips.

COMUS. Two such I saw, what time the labour'd Oxe  
In his loose traces from the furrow came,

And the swink't hedger at his Supper sate;

I saw them under a greene mantling vine

That crawls along the side of yon small hill,

Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots,

Their port was more then humane; as they stood,

I tooke it for a faërie vision

Of some gay creatures of the element

That in the colours of the Rainbow live

And play i'th plighted clouds, I was aw-strooke,

And as I past, I worshipt; if those you seeke

It were a journey like the path to heav'n

To helpe you find them.

LADIE. Gentle villager

What readiest way would bring me to that place?

COMUS. Due west it rises from this shrubbie point.

LADIE. To find out that good shepherd I suppose

In such a scant allowance of starre light

Would overtask the best land-pilots art

Without the sure guesse of well-practiz'd feet.

COMUS. I know each lane, and every alley greene

Dingle, or bushie dell of this wild wood,

And every boskie bourne from side to side

My daylie walks and ancient neighbourhood,

And if your stray attendance be yet lodg'd

Or shroud within these limits, I shall know

Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted larke

From her thack't palate rowse, if otherwise

I can conduct you Ladie to a low

But loyall cottage, where you may be safe

Till further quest.'

LADIE. Shepherd I take thy word,

And trust thy honest offer'd courtesie,

COMUS

A Maske



COMUS  
A Maske

Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds  
With smoakie rafters, then in tapstrie halls,  
And courts of Princes, where it first was nam'd,  
And yet is most prætended: in a place  
Lesse warranted then this, or lesse secure  
I cannot be, that I should feare to change it,  
Eye me blest Providence, and square my triall  
To my proportion'd strength. Shepheard lead on.—

THE TWO BROTHERS.

ELD. BRO. Unmuffle yee faint stars, and thou fair moon  
That wontst to love the travellers benizon  
Stoope thy pale visage through an amber cloud  
And disinherit Chaos, that rains here  
In double night of darknesse, and of shades;  
Or if your influence be quite damm'd up  
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper  
Though a rush candle from a wicker hole  
Of some clay habitation visit us  
With thy long levell'd rule of streaming light  
And thou shalt be our starre of Arcadie  
Or Tyrian Cynosure.

SEC. BRO. Or if our eyes  
Be barr'd that happinesse, might we but heare  
The folded flocks pen'd in their watled cotes,  
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,  
Or whistle from the Lodge, or village cock  
Count the night watches to his featherie Dames,  
T'would be some solace yet, some little chearing  
In this close dungeon of innumerable bowes.  
But ô [oh] that haplesse virgin our lost sister  
Where may she wander now, whether betake her  
From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles?  
Perhaps some cold banke is her boulder now  
Or 'gainst the rugged barke of some broad Elme  
Leans her unpillow'd head fraught with sad fears.  
What if in wild amazement, and affright  
Or while we speake within the direfull graspe

COMUS  
A Maske

Of Savage hunger, or of Savage heat?  
ELD. BRO. Peace brother, be not over exquisite  
To cast the fashion of uncertaine evils,  
For grant they be so, while they rest unknowne  
What need a man forestall his date of griefe  
And run to meet what he would most avoid?  
Or if they be but false alarms of Feare  
How bitter is such selfe-delusion?  
I doe not thinke my sister so to seeke  
Or so unprincip'l'd in vertues book  
And the sweet peace that goodnesse bosoms ever  
As that the single want of light, and noise  
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)  
Could stir the constant mood of her calme thoughts  
And put them into mis-becomming plight.  
Vertue could see to doe what vertue would  
By her owne radiant light, though Sun and Moon  
Were in the flat Sea sunck, and Wisdoms selfe  
Oft seeks to sweet retired Solitude  
Where with her best nurse Contemplation  
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings  
That in the various bustle of resort  
Were all to ruffl'd, and sometimes impair'd.  
He that has light within his owne cleere brest  
May sit i' th center, and enjoy bright day,  
But he that hides a darke soule, and foule thoughts  
Benighted walks under the mid-day Sun,  
Himselfe is his owne dungeon.  
SEC. BRO. 'Tis most true  
That musing meditation most affects  
The Pensive secrecie of desert cell  
Farre from the cheerefull haunt of men, and heards,  
And sits as safe as in a Senat house  
For who would rob an Hermit of his weeds  
His few books, or his beades, or maple dish,  
Or doe his gray hairs any violence?  
But beautie like the faire Hesperian tree  
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard

COMUS  
A Maske

Of dragon watch with uninchant'd eye  
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit  
From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.  
You may as well spread out the unsun'd heaps  
Of misers treasure by an outlaws den  
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope  
Danger will winke on opportunitie  
And let a single helplesse mayden passe  
Uninjur'd in this wild surrounding wast.  
Of night, or lonelynesse it reckes me not  
I feare the dred events that dog them both,  
Lest some ill greeting touch attempt the person  
Of our unowned sister.

ELD. BRO. I doe not brother  
Inferre, as if I thought my sisters state  
Secure without all doubt, or controversie:  
Yet where an equall poise of hope, and feare  
Does arbitrate th' event, my nature is  
That I encline to hope, rather then feare  
And gladly banish squint suspicion.  
My sister is not so defencelesse lest  
As you imagine, she has a hidden strength  
Which you remember not.

SEC. BRO. What hidden strength  
Unlesse the strength of heav'n, if meane that?

ELD. BRO. I meane that too, but yet a hidden strength  
Which if heav'n gave it, may be term'd her owne:

'Tis chastitie, my brother, chastitie:

She that has that, is clad in compleat steele,  
And like a quiver'd nymph with arrowes keene  
May trace huge forrests, and unharbour'd heaths  
Infamous hills, and sandy perillous wilds  
Where through the sacred rays of chastitie  
No savage fierce, bandite, or mountaneere  
Will dare to soyle her virgin puritie  
Yea there, where very desolation dwells  
By grots, and caverus shag'd with horrid shades  
She may passe on with unblench't majestie

COMUS  
A Maske

Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.  
Some say no evill thing that walks by night  
In fog, or fire, by lake, or moorish fen  
Blew meager hag, or stubborne unlayd ghost  
That breaks his magicke chaines at curfeu time  
No goblin, or swart Faërie of the mine  
Has hurtfull power ore true virginity.  
Doe yee beleeve me yet, or shall I call  
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece  
To testifie the armes of Chastitie?  
Hence had the huntresse Dian her dred bow  
Faire silver-shafted Queene for ever chast  
Wherewith we tam'd the brinded lionesse  
And spotted mountaine pard, but set at nought  
The frivolous bolt of Cupid, gods and men  
Fear'd her sterne frowne, & she was queen oth' woods.  
What was that snakie headed Gorgon sheild  
That wife Minerva wore, unconquer'd virgin  
Wherewith she freez'd her foes to congeal'd stone?  
But rigid looks of Chast austeritie  
And noble grace that dash't brute violence  
With sudden adoration, and blancke aw.  
So deare to heav'n is saintly chastitie  
That when a soule is found sincerely so,  
A thousand liveried angels lackie her  
Driving farre off each thing of sinne, and guilt,  
And in cleere dreeme, and solemne vision  
Tell her of things that no grosse eare can heare,  
Till oft converse with heav'nly habitants  
Begin to cast a beame on th' outward shape  
The unpolluted temple of the mind  
And turnes it by degrees to the souls essence  
Till all bee made immortall; but when lust  
By unchast looks, loose gestures, and foule talke  
But most by leud, and lavish act of sin  
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,  
The soule growes clotted by contagion,  
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite loose

COMUS  
A Maske

The divine propertie of her first being.  
Such are those thick, and gloomie shadows damp  
Oft seene in Charnell vaults, and Sepulchers  
Hovering, and sitting by a new made grave  
As loath to leave the body that it lov'd,  
And link't it selfe by carnall sensualitie  
To a degenerate and degraded state.

SEC. BRO. How charming is divine Philosophie!  
Not harsh, and crabbed as dull fools suppose,  
But musicall as is Apollo's lute,  
And a perpetuall feast of nectar'd sweets  
Where no crude surfet raigns.

ELD. BRO. List, list I heare

Some farre off hallow breake the silent aire.

SEC. BRO. Me thought so too, what should it be?

ELD. BRO. For certaine

Either some one like us night founder'd here,  
Or else some neighbour wood man, or at worst  
Some roaving robber calling to his fellows.

SEC. BRO. Heav'n keepe my sister, agen agen and neere,  
Best draw, and stand upon our guard.

ELD. BRO. Ile hallow,

If he be friendly he comes well, if not

Defence is a good cause, and Heav'n be for us.

THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT HABITED LIKE A  
SHEPHEARD.

That hallow I should know, what are you, speake,  
Come not too neere, you fall on iron stakes else.

SPIRIT. What voice is that, my yong Lord? speak agen.

SEC. BRO. O brother 'tis my father Shepheard sure.

ELD. BRO. Thyrsis? whose artfull strains have oft delayd

The huddling brook to heare his madrigale,

And sweeten'd every muskrose of the dale,

How cam'st thou here good Swaine, hath any ram

Slip't from the fold, or yong kid lost his dam,

Or stragglng weather the pen't flock forsook,

How couldst thou find this darke sequester'd nook?

SPIRIT. O my lov'd masters heire, and his next joy  
 I came not here on such a triviall toy  
 As a strayd Ewe, or to pursue the stealth  
 Of pilfering wolfe, not all the fleecie wealth  
 That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought  
 To this my errand, and the care it brought.  
 But ô [oh] my virgin Ladie where is she,  
 How chance she is not in your companie?  
 ELD. BRO. To tell thee sadly shepheard, without blame  
 Or our neglect, wee lost her as wee came.  
 SPIRIT. Aye me unhappie then my fears are true.  
 ELD. BRO. What fears good Thyrsis? prethee briefly shew.  
 SPIRIT. Ile tell you, 'tis not vaine, or fabulous  
 (Though so esteem'd by shallow ignorance)  
 What the sage Poëts taught by th' heav'nly Muse  
 Storied of old in high immortall verse  
 Of dire Chimera's and enchanted Iles  
 And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to hell,  
 For such there be, but unbeliefe is blind.  
 Within the navill of this hideous wood  
 Immur'd in cypresse shades a Sorcerer dwells  
 Of Bacchus, and of Circe borne, great Comus,  
 Deepe skill'd in all his mother's witcheries,  
 And here to every thirstie wanderer  
 By slie enticement gives his banefull cup  
 With many murmurs mixt, whose pleasing poison  
 The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,  
 And the inglorious likenesse of a beast  
 Fixes instead, unmoulding reasons mintage  
 Character'd in the face; this have I learn't  
 Tending my flocks hard by i' th' hilly crofts  
 That brow this bottome glade, whence night by night  
 He and his monstrous rout are heard to howle  
 Like stabl'd wolves, or tigers at their prey  
 Doing abhorred rites to Hecate  
 In their obscured haunts of inmost bowres.  
 Yet have they many baits, and guilefull spells  
 T' inveigle, and invite th' unwarie sense

COMUS  
 A Maske

COMUS  
A Maske

Of them that passe unweeting by the way.  
This evening late by then the chewing flocks  
Had ta'ne their supper on the favourite herbe  
Of Knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold  
I sate me downe to watch upon a bank  
With ivie canopied, and interwove  
With flaunting hony-suckle, and began  
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy  
To meditate my rural minstrelsie  
Till fancie had her fill, but ere a close  
The wonted roare was up amidst the woods,  
And filld the aire with barbarous dissonance  
At which I ceas't, and listen'd them a while  
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence  
Gave respit to the drowsie frighted steeds  
That draw the litter of close-curtain'd sleepe.  
At last a soft, and solemne breathing sound  
Rose like a steame of rich distill'd Perfumes  
And stole upon the aire, that even Silence  
Was tooke e're she was ware, and wish't she might  
Deny her nature, and be never more  
Still to be so displac't. I was all eare,  
And took in strains that might create a soule  
Under the ribs of Death, but ô [oh] ere long  
Too well I did perceive it was the voice  
Of my most honour'd Lady your dear sister.  
Amaz'd I stood, harrow'd with grieve and feare,  
And ô [oh] poore haplesse nightingale thought I  
How sweet thou sing'st, how neere the deadly snare!  
Then downe the lawns I ran with headlong hast  
Through paths, and turnings often trod by day  
Till guided by my eare I found the place  
Where that dam'd wisard hid in slie disguise  
(For so by certain signs I knew) had met  
Alreadie, ere my best speed could prævent  
The aidlesse innocent Ladie his wish't prey,  
Who gently ask't if he had seene such two  
Supposing him some neighbour villager;

COMUS  
A Maske

Longer I durst not stay, but soone I guess't  
Yee were the two she mean't, with that I sprung  
Into swift flight till I had found you here,  
But farther know I not.

SEC. BRO. O night and shades  
How are yee joyn'd with hell in triple knot  
Against th' unarmed weaknesse of one virgin  
Alone, and helplesse! is this the confidence  
You gave me brother?

ELD. BRO. Yes, and keep it still,  
Leane on it safely, not a period  
Shall be unsaid for me; against the threats  
Of malice or of sorcerie, or that power  
Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firme,  
Vertue may be assail'd, but never hurt,  
Surpriz'd by unjust force, but not enthrall'd,  
Yea even that which mischiefe meant most harme,  
Shall in the happie triall prove most glorie.  
But evill on it selfe shall backe recoyle  
And mixe no more with goodnesse, when at last  
Gather'd like scum, and sett'd to it selfe  
It shall bee in eternall restlesse change  
Selfe fed, and selfe consum'd, if this faile  
The pillar'd firmanent is rottennesse,  
And earths base built on stubble. But come let's on.  
Against th' opposing will and arme of heav'n  
May never this just sword be lifted up,  
But for that damn'd magician, let him be girt  
With all the greisly legions that troope  
Under the sootie flag of Acheron,  
Harpyies and Hydra's, or all the monstrous bugs  
'Twixt Africa, and Inde, Ile find him out  
And force him to restore his purchase backe  
Or drag him by the curles, and cleave his scalpe  
Downe to the hipps.

SPIRIT. Alas good ventrous youth,  
I love thy courage yet, and bold Emprise,  
But here thy sword can doe thee little stead,



COMUS  
A Maske

Farre other arms, and other weapons must  
Be those that quell the might of hellish charms,  
He with his bare wand can unthred thy joynts  
And crumble all thy sinewes.  
ELD. BRO. Why prethee shepheard  
How durst thou then thy selfe approach so nēere  
As to make this relation?  
SPIRIT. Care and utmost shifts  
How to secure the Ladie from surprisall  
Brought to my mind a certaine shepheard lad  
Of small regard to see to, yet well skill'd  
In every vertuous plant, and healing herbe  
That spreads her verdant leafe to th' morning ray,  
He lov'd me well, and oft would beg me sing,  
Which when I did, he on the tender grasse  
Would sit, and hearken even to extasie,  
And in requitall ope his leather'n scrip,  
And shew me simples of a thousand names  
Telling their strange, and vigorous faculties,  
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,  
But of divine effect, he cull'd me out;  
The leafe was darkish, and had prickles on it,  
But in another Countrie, as he said,  
Bore a bright golden flowre, but not in this soyle:  
Unknowne, and like esteem'd, and the dull swayne  
Treads on it dayly with his clouted shoone,  
And yet more med'cinall is it then that Moly  
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave,  
He call'd it Hæmony, and gave it me  
And bad me keepe it as of soveraine use  
'Gainst all inchantments, mildew blast, or damp  
Or gastly furies apparition;  
I purs't it up, but little reck'ning made  
Till now that this extremity compell'd,  
But now I find it true, for by this means  
I knew the foule inchanter though disguis'd,  
Enter'd the very lime twigs of his spells,  
And yet came off, if you have this about you

(As I will give you when wee goe) you may  
Boldly assault the necromancers hall,  
Where if he be, with dauntlesse hardihood  
And brandish't blade rush on him, breake his glasse,  
And shed the lushious liquor on the ground  
But sease his wand, though he and his curst crew  
Feirce signe of battaile make, and menace high,  
Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoake,  
Yet will they soone retire, if he but shrinke.  
ELD. BRO. Thyrsis lead on apace Ile follow thee,  
And some good angell beare a sheild before us.

COMUS  
A Maske

The Scene Changes to a stately palace set out with all manner of deliciousnesse, soft musicke, tables spred with all dainties. Comus appeares with his rabble, and the Ladie set in an enchanted chaire to whom he offers his glasse, which she puts by, and goes about to rise.

COMUS. Nay Ladie sit; if I but wave this wand,  
Your nerves are all chain'd up in alabaster,  
And you a statue; or as Daphne was  
Root bound that fled Apollo.

LADIE. Foole doe not boast,  
Thou canst not touch the freedome of my mind  
With all thy charms, although this corporall rind  
Thou hast immanacl'd, while heav'n sees good.

COMUS. Why are you vext Ladie, why doe you frowne?  
Here dwell no frowns, nor anger, from these gates  
Sorrow flies farre: see here be all the pleasurs  
That fancie can beget on youthfull thoughts  
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns  
Brisk as the April buds in primrose season.  
And first behold this cordial julep here  
That flames, and dances in his crystall bounds  
With spirits of balme, and fragrant syrops mixt.  
Not that Nepenthes which the wife of Thone  
In Ægypt gave to Jove borne Helena  
Is of such power to stirre up joy as this,  
To life so friendly, or so coole to thirst.

COMUS  
A Maske

Why should you be so cruell to your selfe,  
And to those daintie limms which nature lent  
For gentle usage, and soft delicacie?  
But you invert the cov'nants of her trust,  
And harshly deale like an ill borrower  
With that which you receiv'd on other termes,  
Scorning the unexempt condition,  
By which all mortall frailty must subsist,  
Refreshment after toile, ease after paine,  
That have been tir'd all day without repast,  
And timely rest have wanted, but faire virgin  
This will restore all soone.

LADIE. T'will not false traitor,  
T'will not restore the truth and honestie  
That thou hast banish't from thy tongue with lies,  
Was this the cottage, and the safe abode  
Thou told'st me of? what grim aspects are these,  
These ugly-headed monsters? Mercie guard me!  
Hence with thy brewd enchantments foule deceiver,  
Hast thou betray'd my credulous innocence  
With visor'd falshood, and base forgerie,  
And wouldst thou seek againe to trap me here  
With lickerish baits fit to ensnare a brute?  
Were it a draft for Juno when she banquets  
I would not tast thy treasonous offer; none  
But such as are good men can give good things,  
And that which is not good, is not delicious  
To a wel-govern'd and wise appetite.

COMUS. O foolishnesse of men! that lend their eares  
To those budge doctors of the Stoick furre,  
And fetch their præcepts from the Cynick tub,  
Praising the leane, and sallow Abstinence.  
Wherefore did Nature powre her bounties forth  
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,  
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks  
Thronging the seas with spawne innumerable  
But all to please, and sate the curious tast?  
And set to work millions of spinning worms,

That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd silk  
 To deck her Sons, and that no corner might  
 Be vacant of her plentie in her owne loyns  
 She hutch't th' all worshipt ore and precious gems  
 To store her children with; if all the world  
 Should in a pet of temperance feed on Pulse,  
 Drink the clear streame, and nothing weare but Freize,  
 Th' all-giver would be unthank't, would be unprais'd,  
 Not halfe his riches known, and yet despis'd,  
 And we should serve him as a grudging master,  
 As a penurious niggard of his wealth,  
 And live like Natures bastards, not her sons,  
 Who would be quite surcharg'd with her own weight,  
 And strangl'd with her wast fertilitie;  
 Th' earth cumber'd, and the wing'd aire dark't with plumes,  
 The heards would over-multitude their Lords,  
 The sea ore-fraught would swell, and th' unsought diamonds  
 Would so emblaze the forehead of the Deep,  
 And so bestudde with stars that they below  
 Would grow inur'd to light, and come at last  
 To gaze upon the Sun with shameless brows.  
 List Ladie be not coy, and be not cosen'd  
 With that same vaunted name Virginitie,  
 Beautie is natures coine, must not be hoorded,  
 But must be currant, and the good thereof  
 Consists in mutuall and partaken blisse,  
 Unsavourie in th' injoyment of it selfe  
 If you let slip time, like a neglected rose  
 It withers on the stalke with languish't head.  
 Beautie is nature's brag, and must be showne  
 In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities  
 Where most may wonder at the workmanship;  
 It is for homely features to keepe home,  
 They had their name thence; course complexions  
 And cheeks of sorry graine will serve to ply  
 The sampler, and to teize the huswifes wooll.  
 What need a vermeil-tinctur'd lip for that  
 Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the Morne

COMUS  
 A Maske

COMUS  
A Maske


There was another meaning in these gifts?  
Thinke what, and be adviz'd, you are but yong yet.  
LADIE. I had not thought to have unlockt my lips  
In this unhallow'd aire, but that this Jugler  
Would thinke to charme my judgement, as mine eyes  
Obtruding false rules pranckt in reasons garbe.  
I hate when vice can bolt her arguments  
And vertue has no tongue to check her pride:  
Impostor doe not charge most innocent nature  
As if she would her children should be riotous  
With her abundance, she good cateresse  
Means her provision only to the good  
That live according to her sober laws  
And holy dictate of spare Temperance,  
If every just man that now pines with want  
Had but a moderate, and beseeming share  
Of that which lewdy-pamper'd Luxurie  
Now heaps upon some few with vast excesse,  
Natures full blessings would be well dispenc't  
In unsuperfluous even proportion,  
And she no whit encomber'd with her store,  
And then the giver would be better thank't,  
His praise due paid, for swinish gluttony  
Ne're looks to heav'n amidst his gorgeous feast,  
But with besotted base ingratitude  
Cramms, and blasphemes his feeder. Shall I goe on?  
Or have I said enough? to him that dares  
Arme his profane tongue with reproachfull words  
Against the Sun-clad power of Chastitie  
Faine would I something say, yet to what end?  
Thou hast nor Eare, nor Soule to apprehend  
The sublime notion and high mysterie  
That must be utter'd to unfold the sage  
And serious doctrine of Virginitie,  
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know  
More happinesse then this thy præsent lot.  
Enjoy your deere Wit, and gay Rhetorick  
That hath so well beene taught her dazling fence,

Thou art not fit to heare thy selfe convinc't;  
Yet should I trie, the uncontroled worth  
Of this pure cause would kindle my rap't spirits  
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,  
That dumb things would be mov'd to sympathize,  
And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake,  
Till all thy magick structures rear'd so high  
Were shatter'd into heaps ore thy false head.

COMUS. She fables not, I feele that I doe feare  
Her words set off by some superior power;  
And though not mortall, yet a cold shuddring dew  
Dips me all o're, as when the wrath of Jove  
Speaks thunder, and the chaines of Erebus  
To some of Saturns crew. I must dissemble,  
And try her yet more strongly. Come; no more,  
This is meere morall babble, and direct  
Against the canon laws of our foundation,  
I must not suffer this, yet 'tis but the lees  
And settlings of a melancholy blood;  
But this will cure all streight, one sip of this  
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight  
Beyond the blisse of dreams. Be wise, and tast.—

The brothers rush in with swords drawne, wrest his  
glasse out of his hand, and breake it against the ground;  
his rout make signe of resistance, but are all driven in;  
the attendant Spirit comes in.

SPIRIT. What, have you let the false enchanter scape?  
O yee mistooke, yee should have snatcht his wand  
And bound him fast; without his rod revers't,  
And backward mutters of dissevering power  
Wee cannot free the Ladie that sits here  
In stonie fetters fixt, and motionlesse;  
Yet stay, be not disturb'd, now I bethinke me,  
Some other meanes I have which may be us'd,  
Which once of Melibæus old I learnt  
The soothest shepheard that ere pipe't on plains.

 There is a gentle nymph not farre from hence

COMUS  
A Maske

COMUS  
A Maske

That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream,  
Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure,  
Whilome shee was the daughter of Lochrine,  
That had the scepter from his father Brute.  
She guiltlesse damsell flying the mad pursuit  
Of her enraged stepdam Guendolen  
Commended her faire innocence to the flood  
That stay'd her flight with his crosse-flowing course,  
The water Nymphs that in the bottome playd  
Held up their pearled wrists and tooke her in,  
Bearing her strait to aged Nereus hall  
Who piteous of her woes reard her lanke head,  
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe  
In nectar'd lavers strewd with asphodil,  
And through the porch, and inlet of each sense  
Dropt in ambroisal oyles till she reviv'd,  
And underwent a quicke, immortall change  
Made goddess of the river; still she retaines  
Her maiden gentlenesse, and often at eve  
Visits the heards along the twilight meadows,  
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill lucke signes  
That the shrewd medling elfe delights to make,  
Which she with precious viold liquors heales.  
For which the shepheards at their festivalls  
Carroll her goodnesse lowd in rusticke layes,  
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her streame  
Of pancies, pinks, and gaudie daffadills.  
And, as the old Swaine said, she can unlocke  
The clasping charme, and thaw the numming spell,  
If she be right invok't in warbled Song,  
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift  
To aid a virgin such as was her selfe  
In hard besetting need, this will I trie  
And adde the power of some adjuring verse.

SONG.

Sabrina faire

Listen where thou art sitting

Under the glassie, coole, translucent wave,  
In twisted braids of lillies knitting  
The loose traine of thy amber-dropping haire,  
Listen for deare honours sake  
Goddesse of the silver lake  
Listen and save.

COMUS  
A Maske

Listen and appeare to us  
In name of great Oceanus,  
By th' earth shaking Neptun's mace  
And Tethys grave magesticke pace,  
By hoarie Nereus wrincled looke,  
And the Carpathian wisards hooke,  
By scalie Tritons winding shell.  
And old sooth saying Glaucus spell,  
By Leucothea's lovely hands,  
And her son that rules the strands,  
By Thetis tinsel-slipper'd feet;  
And the songs of Sirens sweet,  
By dead Parthenope's deare tomb,  
And faire Ligea's golden comb,  
Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks  
Sleeking her soft alluring locks,  
By all the Nymphs that nightly dance  
Upon thy streams with wilie glance,  
Rise, rise and heave thy rosie head  
From thy coral-paven bed,  
And bridle in thy headlong wave  
Till thou our summons answerd have.  
Listen and save.

SABRINA RISES ATTENDED BY WATER  
NIMPHEs AND SINGs.

By the rushie fringed banke,  
Where growes the willow and the osier dancke  
My sliding chariot stayes,  
Thicke set with agat, and the azurne sheene  
Of turkkis blew, and Emrould greene



COMUS  
A Maske


That in the channell strays,  
Whilst from off the waters fleet  
Thus I set my printlesse feet  
Ore the cowslips velvet head,  
That bends not as I tread,  
Gentle swaine at thy request  
I am here.

SPIRIT. Goddess deare  
Wee implore thy powerfull hand  
To undoe the charmed band  
Of true virgin here distrest,  
Through the force, and through the wile  
Of unblest inchanter vile.  
SABRINA. Shepheard tis my office best  
To helpe insnared chastitie;  
Brightest Ladie looke on me,  
Thus I sprinkle on thy brest  
Drops that from my fountaine pure  
I have kept of precious cure,  
Thrice upon thy fingers tip,  
Thrice upon thy rubied lip,  
Next this marble venom'd seate  
Smear'd with gummes of glutenous heate  
I touch with chast palmes moist and cold,  
Now the spell hath lost his hold.  
And I must hast ere morning houre  
To waite in Amphitrite's bowre.

SABRINA DESCENDS AND THE LADIE RISES  
OUT OF HER SEATE.

SPIRIT. Virgin, daughter of Locrine  
Sprung of old Anchises line  
May thy brimmed waves for this  
Their full tribute never misse  
From a thousand pettie rills,  
That tumble downe the snowie hills:  
Summer drouth, or singed aire

COMUS  
A Maske

Never scorch thy tresses faire,  
Nor wet Octobers torrent flood  
Thy molten crystall fill with mudde,  
May thy billowes rowle a shoare  
The beryll, and the golden ore,  
May thy loftie head be crown'd  
With many a tower, and terrasse round,  
And here and there thy banks upon  
With groves of myrrhe, and cinnamon.  
 Come Ladie while heaven lends us grace,  
Let us fly this cursed place,  
Lest the sorcerer us intice  
With some other new device.  
Not a wast, or needlesse sound  
Till we come to holyer ground,  
I shall be your faithfull guide  
Through this gloomie covert wide,  
And not many furlongs thence  
Is your Fathers residence,  
Where this night are met in state  
Many a friend to gratulate  
His wish't presence, and beside  
All the Swains that there abide,  
With Jiggs, and rurall dance resort,  
Wee shall catch them at their sport,  
And our suddaine comming there  
Will double all their mirth, and chere,  
Come let us hast the starrs are high  
But night sits monarch yet in the mid skie.

The Scene changes presenting Ludlow towne and the  
Presidents Castle, then come in Countrie dancers, after  
them the attendant Spirit with the two Brothers and  
the Ladie.

SONG.

SPIRIT. Back shepheards, back enough your play,  
Till next Sun-shine holiday,

COMUS  
A Maske

Here be without duck or nod,  
Other trippings to be trod  
Of lighter toes, and such Court guise  
As Mercury did first devise  
With the mincing Dryades  
On the lawns, and on the leas.



THIS SECOND SONG PRÆSENTS THEM TO  
THEIR FATHER AND MOTHER.

Noble Lord, and Lady bright,  
I have brought yee new delight,  
Here behold so goodly growne,  
Three faire branches of your owne,  
Heav'n hath timely tri'd their youth,  
Their faith, their patience, and their truth,  
And sent them here through hard assays  
With a crowne of deathlesse Praise,  
To triumph in victorious dance  
Ore sensuall Folly, and Intemperance.

THE DANCES ENDED, THE SPIRIT  
EPILOGIZES.

SPIRIT. To the Ocean now I flie,  
And those happie climes that lie  
Where day never shuts his eye,  
Up in the broad fields of the skie:  
There I suck the liquid ayre  
All amidst the gardens faire  
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three  
That sing about the golden tree,  
Along the crisped shades, and bowres  
Revells the spruce and jocond Spring,  
The Graces, and the rosie-bosom'd Howres  
Thither all their bounties bring,  
That there æternall Summer dwells  
And west winds, with muskie wing  
About the cedar'n alleys fling  
Nard, and Cassia's balmie smells.

COMUS  
A Maske

Iris there with humid bow  
Waters the odorous banks that blow  
Flowers of more mingled hew  
Then her purfl'd scarfe can shew,  
And drenches with Elysian dew  
(List mortalls, if your cares be true)  
Beds of Hyacinth, and roses,  
Where young Adonis oft reposes,  
Waxing well of his deepe wound  
In slumber soft, and on the ground  
Sadly sits th' Assyrian Queene;  
But farre above in spangled sheene  
Celestiall Cupid her fam'd Son advanc't,  
Holds his deare Psyche sweet intranc't  
After her wandring labours long,  
Till free consent the gods among  
Make her his æternall Bride,  
And from her faire unspotted side  
Two blissfull twins are to be borne,  
Youth, and Joy; so Jove hath sworne.  
 But now my taske is smoothly done,  
I can fly, or I can run  
Quickly to the greene earths end,  
Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend,  
And from thence can soare as soone  
To the corners of the Moone.  
 Mortalls that would follow me,  
Love vertue, she alone is free,  
She can teach yee how to clime  
Higher then the Sphærie chime;  
Or if vertue feeble were  
Heav'n it selfe would stoope to her.





**THE PRINCIPALL PERSONS IN THIS MASKE; WERE  
THE LORD BRACLY, MR. THOMAS EGERTON,  
THE LADY ALICE EGERTON.  
THE END.**



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